

CHERI BUSTOS  
17TH DISTRICT, ILLINOIS

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

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DEMOCRATIC STEERING  
AND POLICY COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-1317

May 11, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-232, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-204, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy,

I write to request that any additional COVID-19 relief funding be denied to any hospital or health provider that chooses to stop accepting Medicaid during this pandemic.

In an attempt to increase Medicaid payments, last month Mercyhealth in Rockford, Illinois—which had \$1.1 billion in assets in 2018 and paid their CEO \$9.3 million—announced that it will no longer accept IlliniCare, Meridian and Molina Medicaid starting on July 21, 2020, and Blue Cross Blue Shield Medicaid on October 22, 2020. Concerningly, there are currently over 66,000 Winnebago County residents who are enrolled in these Medicaid Managed Care Plans.

Mercyhealth's decision to refuse some Medicaid patients' insurance would be deeply disappointing in the best of times, but in the midst of a pandemic it is unconscionable. One mother in Rockford, Illinois wrote my office stating that her family will need to find a new health care provider if Mercyhealth does not change course.

In her letter, she explained that her son has Down syndrome, autism and medium-chain acyl-CoA dehydrogenase deficiency (MCADD). In addition, she has been battling breast cancer since November 2018. The family now worries about having to find a new pediatrician, numerous pediatric specialists, a new primary care doctor and a new cancer team in Chicago, which is nearly two hours away. One can only imagine how this family's concerns are exacerbated by the hundreds of cases of COVID-19 in their local community.

While I support any hospital's right to negotiate better reimbursement rates, threatening to not accept these Medicaid patients' insurance during a national public health crisis—all to increase payment—is irresponsible and recklessly puts people at risk. Although hospitals and health care providers deserve appropriate compensation, those who abandon their patients in the middle of a pandemic should not receive federal relief funds.

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As you know, Congress has provided \$100 billion to hospitals and other health care providers through the CARES Act and another \$75 billion in the Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act to offset losses caused by the COVID-19 outbreak. Should Congress pass additional COVID-19 related funding, I request that this funding be denied to any hospital or health provider that chooses to stop accepting Medicaid during this pandemic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cheri Bustos". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cheri Bustos  
Member of Congress